

**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY****REGION 10**

1200 Sixth Avenue
Seattle, Washington 98101

AUG 26 1996

Reply To
Attn Of: ECO-088

Kim Titus, District Ranger
Hood River Ranger District
6780 Highway 35
Mt. Hood-Parkdale, Oregon 97041

Dear Ms. Titus:

In accordance with our responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the Mt. Hood Meadows Ski Area Master Plan/Access Road Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (draft SEIS). The draft SEIS analyzes action alternatives proposed to meet the purpose and need of expanding existing skiing capacity on Mt. Hood to meet future summer and winter recreational demand.

Our review has revealed concerns regarding expanded development within the White River Late Successional Reserve (LSR). The Record of Decision (ROD) for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (Northwest Forest Plan) states that LSR's are "to be managed to protect and enhance conditions of late-successional and old-growth related species including the northern spotted owl..." (Northwest Forest Plan ROD, p. C-11). In addition, on page C-17 it states that "Development of new facilities that may adversely affect Late-Successional Reserves should not be permitted." As such, EPA strongly supports the Forest Service Preferred Alternative S4 which would "maximize the potential of the existing permit area as a day-use ski area" (draft SEIS p. S-5).

In addition to our concerns about the impacts to LSR's we are also concerned that increased open areas on steep slopes caused by new ski area development will increase sediment loading in the East Fork Hood River drainage contributing to long-term water quality impacts and associated aquatic ecosystem degradation.

Based on our review, we have rated the Forest Service Preferred Alternative S4, Alternative S1 (No Action) and S2 of the draft SEIS LO (Lack of Objections). We have rated Alternative S3 and the Permittee's Proposed Action Alternative S5 EC - 2 (Environmental Concerns - Insufficient Information) due to impacts on LSR's and potential water quality impacts

to the East Fork Hood River.

This rating and a summary of our comments will be published in the *Federal Register*. A copy of our rating system is enclosed. Thank you for the opportunity to review this draft EIS. Please contact John Bregar at (206) 553-1984 if you have any questions about our comments.

Sincerely,



Richard B. Parkin, Manager
Geographic Implementation Unit